

Rules Change by MistressYin

Series: [Just A Word \[19\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Language: English

Characters: Carol (Stranger Things), Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper (mentioned), Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers (mentioned), Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Tommy H. (Stranger Things), Will Byers

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-11-20

Updated: 2018-11-20

Packaged: 2022-04-23 03:02:38

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,978

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Steve could smell the intoxicating taste of alcohol from across the street.

Rules Change

Author's Note:

Hello! This ones longer than normal!

And the phrase of the day is...Rules Change!

Steve may not be the best at writing papers, but he was good at writing. He understood grammar, he could read a paper and see each mistake and where everything should be placed.

He was always good a reading, he loved to read. Books were easy access and you could always get lost in them. No work or movement was involved in reading, so he used to curl up behind the laundry machines with picture books and stay there all day. Reading was distracting, from hunger and cuts and screams from the kitchen.

He curled up around the newly installed fire place at the Byers house (which he was at more than his own house), Romeo and Juliet in his hands a book he was required to read for school. His hair was down and hung low on is neck, curling around his ears. He had the glasses he had sworn off wearing after one too many shattered lenses digging into his face resting on his nose, and white gloves to hide his molten hands.

He got lost in the words and worlds, so he didn't notice when the kids came in the room chatting loudly until he heard a snort. He looked up in surprise.

"Are you reading Romeo and Juliet?"

"Are you wearing glasses?"

He grinned at both of the questions he was fired with, asked by the Wheelers. Nancy, ever observant had noticed the frames on his face, and Mike had seen the title of the book and found it amusing in his hands most likely. He guessed they didn't see him read much. "Yes and yes." He responded then motioned happily to his hot chocolate. "Joyce made hot chocolate. It's in the kitchen if you want some." He

took a large gulp right after he said it, humming at the warmth.

Jane dragged Mike to the kitchen, Jonathon following after with a mumble of, "Making sure catastrophes aren't occurring, don't mind me..."

Steve attempted to go back to his reading, but was interrupted by Max and Lucas settling down next to the fire with him.

"Romance?" Lucas asked with a curl of his lip. Steve nodded in amusement.

"I didn't know you liked to read." Max raised an eyebrow.

Steve shrugged. "I always have." He mumbled lightly, turning the page.

"Do you like reading Romeo and Juliet?"

Steve laughed, furrowing his brow. "Well, I don't hate it, but I wouldn't choose it. I should read it, though, because it is a classic."

Lucas groaned, leaned against the wall next the fire and pushing his feet out of his socks. He wiggled his toes absently, yawning with a shiver at the contrast between the warmth and the cold.

Nancy flopped down across from them, eyes annoyed. "You haven't finished it yet? You only have two more days." She complained, giving him a pointed look. Steve scoffed.

"I'm offended. Yes, I have finished it. I'm just rereading some of the more important parts for when the quiz us."

Nancy looked impressed. "So do you read a lot?" she asked while getting into a more comfortable position, crossing her legs.

Steve sat his book down, realizing he was going to get nowhere reading it. He beamed.

"I love reading. Not so much writing, but reading's the best. I think my names signed in the majority of the library books they have." He admitted sheepishly.

Lucas laughed. "Fictional or educational?"

Steve made a face, holding his hands up like a scale. "I just like reading."

Lucas and Max's names were called, ending the discussion shortly as Nancy followed. He began reading again, soaking up the information determinedly.

The reason he was here in the first place as because the kids wanted to go to the arcade for some odd reason again. Jonathon and Nancy were going to a party (with much coaxing from Nancy), so no one could drive because Joyce worked late.

So, no one driving became Steve driving.

What greater punishment is there than life when you've lost everything that is worth living?...

He jotted the quote down instantly; he particularly liked that one.

He probably should be asking the kids if they were ready to go, but he wasn't quite done.

My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite...

Steve thought that was probably one of the most well-known quotes. He wrote it down with less enthusiasm. He had never seen evidence of love as true as Romeo and Juliet's.

His parents surely didn't fit. Neither did Joyce's love life, or Jim's. The Wheelers were a no go, just like the Hargrove's. He didn't know much about the Sinclair's to claim they loved each other like Romeo and Juliet. Jonathon and Nancy were no Romeo and Juliet, more of an Edward and Bella scenario, really. Girl meet guy, guy leaves, girl finds comfort in other guy, guy comes back, girl goes to the other guy again.

Steve was not marrying their child, okay? It was not happening.

He frowned. Romeo and Juliet? Maxine and Lucas were too young.

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet...

Besides, Max wasn't so girly or desperate. Neither was Nancy anyway. From what he knew of the Sinclair's, Lucas' mother could handle herself quite well.

He sighed as the kids began yelling at him to go, so he grabbed his book and keys and swept out the door, forgoing a coat and hat.

These violent delights have violent ends, and in their triumph die, like fire and powder, which, as they kiss, consume...

He read one of the most famous lines of the book from his notes.

Steve realized that the kids had all clambered in the car, talking animatedly about some new game that had arrived at the arcade.

These violent delights have violent ends...

Steve finally slid the notebook into his car compartment, pressing down on the gas pedal and heading in a direction he had long since memorized.

His head swam the whole ride to the store, thinking about a real-life Romeo and Juliet love. By the time he pulled into the parking lot, he had arrived at the conclusion no such love existed beyond the fictional realm.

"Alright suckers, head on out. You have two hours ok? No more no less, if you kids aren't waiting patiently outside of that building when I'm back I'm going straight home. Got it?" The kids all made snarky remarks about his bluff before rushing into their heaven on earth.

Steve decided to clear his head with the cold air, knowing that he was probably going to become ill if he stepped outside of his car. He did anyway, his shoes cracking against gravel as he wondered what he was doing exactly.

He wasn't sure how long he had been walking, but it was dark now so he could only guess at the least a half an hour. His mind was

reeling in circles, unable to grasp one thought for too long. Each silvery idea slipped between his grasp as he got caught up in humming a catchy song or just studying buildings.

He weaved around an old house, coming up to a vaguely familiar street.

He strode into the street, starting when a VERY familiar people waved over at him. Tommy and Carol were screeching at him, both in wrinkled clothes. His experienced eye caught the sway in their movements and the slow way they spoke, and when they eventually stumbled over to him he could smell the liquor on them as clear as icy water.

The strong echo of the drink gave him a woozy feeling, hazy and terrifying memories of downing shots just like they had clearly done momentarily paralyzing him. Collecting his senses, he gave them a curt nod.

“Tom, Carol.”

Carol laughed hard, her curly hair falling over her face as she leaned on her counterpart. “No need to be so—“ She did an odd movement with her tongue. “—Formal Stevie!”

A slender finger jabbed him in the chest before she broke back into fits of hysterical laughter.

When she finally composed herself to the best of her abilities she batted her eyelashes mischievously at him. “Anyway we-we just saw you and thought! Omygod! That’s Harrington! And thought well maybe you wanted ta, I don’t know, uh, get like a drink with us?” She smiled. “A drink with us you know?” She had to have had a fair amount of alcohol if she was repeating herself like this. Or maybe she just didn’t hold it well.

“Like old times!” Tommy cheered, too drunk to remember that he had been the one ignoring Steve, not the other way around.

Steve leaned himself against the wall of the pub, the bricks scraping his back with how hard he was digging into it. He needed to get back

to the kids.

“I’m babysitting right now. I don’t think I should drink on the job. It would be irresponsible of me.”

“I thought one of your rules was never stay sober long enough to remember you were sober?”

Steve closed his eyes and grit his teeth, wondering how someone so drunk could remember that line so perfectly. “Rules change.”

If anyone knew that, it was Steve. His father changed the rules a lot. Or used to.

He reflected on the two of them and decided neither of them were Romeo and Juliet either. Maybe it was just their personalities, but he thought that they were quite unsuited to earn the title of Romeo and Juliet. They both just seemed to have the same agenda, he wasn’t even sure they enjoyed each other’s company outside of drunkenness.

Steve could see both the terrifying and tempting liquor they had on them, unsure if he could continue to control himself.

It’s not like one drink would hurt him, right? He wouldn’t drink much of it. Just a sip. Not enough to even get him intoxicated.

He absently remembered his new rule, the one that said he wasn’t allowed to drink, but went back to his old words with a small quirk of his lips.

Rules change.

Steve horrified himself with his thoughts, and knew he had to get back to the car now. Or, at least, away from his old ‘friends’.

There’s an old saying that applies to me: you can’t lose a game if you don’t play the game...

His noted quote slid back into his head, if he didn’t drink, he couldn’t get into any trouble right now.

Solution, stay sober.

The only problem was he was almost on hundred percent positive he had never wanted a drink more in his life.

He was aware almost bitterly of how cold it was and pulled his long sleeves down tighter, breathing deeply.

“Sorry, Carol, Tommy, but I got to get back to the kids.”

He was not his father, or his mother, and he would not forget about his responsibilities over a craving.

He could handle this.

The scent surrounded him and pulled him in but resisting was easier when he had a bunch of rascals that were relying on him to get them home safely.

His heartbeat sped up. The wind bit into his skin. His mind was anything but clear right now. The iron smell of his father’s carpet had never been stronger. His mind was going a mile a minute. The water stopped its decent downward. Could he walk away? He could feel the itch of grass under his skin.

But Steve resisted. After all, he had a new set of rules to follow.

He had to maintain his status of being a damn good babysitter.

Author's Note:

Thanks again from MistressYin!